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SENSITIVE
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USDA FAS FOR OCRA/FLEMINGS, KUYPERS;
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TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ETRD](#) [TBIO](#) [WTO](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIA LOSING PATIENCE WITH TYPOS ON VET
CERTIFICATES

REF: A) HANSEN/HAMILTON EMAIL, B) MOSCOW 269, C)
MOSCOW 2134, D) MOSCOW 2435

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Russian Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance Service (VPSS) informed via official letter that it is running out of patience with the amount of errors being discovered on veterinary documentation accompanying U.S. poultry and pork shipments to Russia. VPSS accuses USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of incompetence and demands that immediate steps be taken to prevent more violations in the future. Original scanned copy and courtesy translation were sent to FAS/OSTA on September 5 (REF A). An informal embassy translation of the backdated letter follows. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) BEGIN TEXT:
Moscow, September 3, 2008
No. FS-NV-2/8901

Assistant Administrator
FSIS Office of International Affairs, USDA
Dr. William James

The Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance Service (VPSS) extends its regards to FSIS, USDA and would like to inform you of the following.

During 2008, U.S. veterinary services repeatedly committed violations in filling out veterinary documents that accompanied veterinary products (poultry, pork) exported from the United States to the Russian Federation.

During routine border veterinary inspection, discrepancies were repeatedly found between information indicated in veterinary certificates and actual facts, namely: container numbers, establishment numbers, name of product, manufacturing dates, and product weight. It was found also that one establishment was indicated

in the veterinary certificate; however products from several establishments were actually found in the container.

Thus in veterinary certificates for poultry no. RFA-045214, RFA-045220, RFA-045222, RFA-045232, the container number was indicated with errors; in veterinary certificate for pork no. RFA-087116, the indicated weight did not correspond to actual weight; in veterinary certificate for poultry no. RFA-031184, the issue date was signed by different signatures; in veterinary certificate for poultry no. RFA-027567, the product name was indicated incorrectly (chicken leg boneless instead of actually shipped chicken breast); in veterinary certificates for poultry no. RFA-045202, RFA-045242, RFA-045244, RFA-045246, RFA-044171, RFA-044172 the number of certificates were indicated with errors on the packaging; in certificates for turkey meat no. RFA-043877, RFA-006822, RFA-006823 the manufacturing dates were indicated incorrectly; in veterinary certificate for poultry no. RFA-027352, RFA-003133, RFA-019871, RFA-044340 and in veterinary certificates for pork no. RFA-076495, RFA-078125, the number of containers were indicated incorrectly; in veterinary certificates no. RFA-078405, RFA-075197, RFA-075198, it was indicated that the products were shipped from one establishment; however the product found in the containers were actually from two establishments; in veterinary certificate for pork no. RFA-082413 the product name was indicated with errors (head

trimming, actually cheek trimming was shipped); in veterinary certificates for pork no. RFP-078410 and RFP-078411 and in veterinary certificates for poultry no. RFA-044247, RFA-044239 the manufacturing dates were indicated incorrectly as were the certificate numbers on the packaging; in veterinary certificate for pork no. RFP-097458 the establishment number was indicated as no. 31965 but the number on the packaging was stamped no. 20239.

In July 2007, VPSS sent FSIS list of 1,071 veterinary certificates that accompanied meat products shipped from the United States to Russian importers. VPSS asked that you confirm or deny issuing of the suspect certificates. In addition in April 2008, a list of 534 veterinary certificates was sent to FSIS with the same request.

In the end of April 2008, VPSS received a response from FSIS with confirmation of authenticity for 860 certificates out of 1,071 which were sent in 2007. However, the United States veterinary service requested from VPSS copies of 534 certificates to confirm their authenticity.

The facts mentioned above show the absence of appropriate control that FSIS has to provide in shipments of veterinary products to the Russian Federation.

In this connection, we ask you to take urgent measures to prevent shipments of veterinary products to the Russian Federation with veterinary certificates prepared with violations. We also ask you to provide VPSS with comprehensive information about the undertaken measures.

Dr. James, please accept my assurances of the deepest respect.

Deputy Head
N.A. Vlasov
END TEXT.

¶3. (SBU) This is not the first time that VPSS has complained about the number of errors being found on U.S. veterinary certificates that accompany meat and poultry shipments to Russia. Periodically, VPSS summarizes all of the typos found on veterinary certificates and, as in this instance, sends the list to FSIS via official letter with a threat to ban either the facilities in question and/or the entire U.S. meat and poultry industry unless measures are taken to stop the number of "gross violations of Russian veterinary rules and regulations" (REF D). Post has reminded VPSS officials on numerous occasions that typos on veterinary certificates have nothing to do with food safety or quality of the product in question. Nevertheless, VPSS views minor and inadvertent clerical mistakes as "gross violations of veterinary regulations" putting them in the same category as Salmonella and anthrax (REF B).

¶4. (SBU) In 2007 the United States exported approximately 1 million metric tons of meat and poultry to Russia valued at an estimated USD 851 million dollars. The quantity of meat that arrived with accompany veterinary certificates that had typographical errors totaled 2,515 metric tons or just 0.25 percent of total U.S. meat shipments to Russia. An example of a minor clerical error is a missing number of the meat processing facility listed on a certificate.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: VPSS is apparently building a case against FSIS to show that it is incapable of ensuring that U.S. meat and poultry meet Russian veterinary regulations so that trade can be restricted when deemed necessary. Post's internal investigation showed that only 0.25 percent of total U.S. meat shipments to Russia in 2007 arrived with veterinary certificates with typos. While most would consider this to be an acceptable margin of error that comes with large trade volumes, VPSS believes otherwise and enforces a strict zero tolerance policy towards human error. Post encourages Washington addresses to seek higher-level intervention to prod Russia into accepting international scientific standards in such cases as called for by international bodies. We should avoid the prospect of VPSS delisting U.S. meat and poultry facilities that produce and export safe products simply because of typographical errors on accompanying certificates. END COMMENT.
BEYRLE